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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D C 20548

CIVIL DIVISION

AUG 27 1969

Dear Mr. Sampson

By letter dated June 4, 1968, the General Accounting Office suggested that the Federal Supply Service formally advertise for bids and satisfy, through competitive means, the Government's needs for disk packs, which are an important data storage medium having random recording and retrieval characteristics. During our follow-up inquiry, we were pleased to note that FSS has made considerable progress toward this goal, especially in developing a Federal specification for disk packs. We understand that you expect to complete this specification in the near future. Moreover, we were advised that FSS expects to publish a qualified products list by December 1969 and that by early 1970 disk pack requirements will be obtained through formal advertisement.

In connection with our follow-up inquiry, we visited ten agencies in the Washington, D.C., area that were using disk packs and found that the agency officials were not fully aware of the existence of Federal Supply Schedule contracts with eight vendors of disk packs and with the various prices offered. Also, many of the officials were not aware that some manufacturers' disk packs can be used with another manufacturer's disk storage drive equipment. The lack of this information often resulted in the procurement of a more expensive disk pack product than appeared to have been necessary.

A Federal Supply Schedule of automatic data processing equipment is available to all agencies, however, it is not clear from this Schedule whether FSS has contracts with firms for Government procurement of disk packs as a separate item or even which of the listed manufacturers are vendors of disk packs.

On July 24, 1969, we discussed this matter with an FSS contracting official, who advised us that FSS plans to issue to the Federal agencies a summary sheet which lists the vendors of disk packs under contract to FSS and the prices offered by these vendors, together with information about the compatibility of various disk pack vendors' products. The issuance of this summary sheet to all Government agencies is responsive to our report to the Congress entitled "Study Of The Acquisition Of Peripheral Equipment For Use With Automatic Data Processing Systems,"

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June 24, 1969, B-115369, which contained a recommendation that, in the period preceding formal advertising for Government disk pack requirements, the head of each agency procure his disk pack needs from the most economical source of supply.

When such information is available, we would appreciate being advised of the amount of savings estimated as being attributable to the procurement of the Government's disk pack requirements through formal advertising.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "V L Hill", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

V. L. Hill
Assistant Director

Mr. Arthur F Sampson, Commissioner
Federal Supply Service
General Services Administration